

The Six “Added Values” of the Baldrige Process

When visiting with senior leaders of an organization about the value of embarking on a Baldrige journey, a frequently used phrase is “It’s not about the Award.” At that point, the discussion moves to writing an application, and the sense of leaders is that “We’re applying for an Award!” How do we convince leaders that there is value within the Baldrige process above and beyond applying for Baldrige or a state or local quality award?

Leaders need to understand what value the Baldrige process provides if it’s not just about the award. Senior leaders and board members look for additional value, especially considering the investment of time involved in developing a 50-page application.

In my experience, the following six “Added Values” of the Baldrige process demonstrate the value of developing a Baldrige application – even if you never submit the application to an award process.

1. **Accountability Tool** – The structure of the Baldrige process forces accountability. When senior leaders take responsibility for a particular Baldrige category, they “own” the linkage among the three components of the application:
 - Organizational Profile – What is important to the organization?
 - Process categories – Based on what is important, what do we do, and how do we do it?
 - Results category – Now that we’ve done it, were we successful?
2. **Sustainability Tool** – The Baldrige process helps document how business is done at the organization. The departure of a senior leader doesn’t have to mean we start all over again. The application describes how the organization operates, and a new senior leader is able to “hit the ground running” because processes are already in place to ensure sustainability over time.
3. **Improvement Tool** – While the application is being written, opportunities for improvement (OFIs) are already being identified, prioritized, and addressed. This set of cross-cutting OFIs ensures a cross-functional approach to improvement.
4. **Alignment Tool** – The Baldrige process helps move the organization past the “silo” mentality that sub-optimizes performance. Senior leaders can no longer view success in their functional area as sufficient – the Baldrige process requires a “systems view” of success. CEOs, Boards of Directors, and other stakeholders should view this as a key value of the process – because their responsibility requires a systems perspective.
5. **Recruitment Tool** – the Baldrige “application” is a great tool for recruitment of board members, senior leaders, and other key staff/stakeholders. Sharing the 50-page application (or just the Organizational Profile) with the request that they review the

document helps them determine if this is an organization and an improvement culture in which they want to participate.

6. **Reward and Recognition Tool** – the Baldrige process has an award component to it. Whether through internal assessment or assessment at the local, state, or national Baldrige Award level, recognition of progress is a great method of encouraging leaders and staff to continue to progress on the performance excellence journey.

The Baldrige process allows leaders to view the organization as a synergistic whole. Getting started is the first step, and demonstrating the value of the Baldrige process is key to helping leaders understand why they should take that first important step.

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